THE PETITION OF THE LADIES at COURT,

Intended to be Preſented to

The HOUSE of LORDS:

AGAINST

The Pride and Luxury of the City Dames, &c.

Sheweth,

THat the Ladies at Court, and generally all thoſe who have the Honour to appear at Court (truely ſenſible of the unmannerly and too ſawcy Imitations (nay Outvyings) of the City Dames) doe humbly ſupplicate your Lordſhips, to repair thoſe Breaches in the Ancient and commendable Fences wherein their Glories were formerly Circumſcribed.

For although in all preceding times it hath been the accuſtomed Practice throughout the whole World, that the Courts of Soveraign Princes are the places wherein their Magnificence ought to ſhine, and from the Splendor and Obſcurity of the Court, Foreign Princes or their Ambaſſadours, meaſure the Force or Weakneſs of Kingdoms: And that 'tis certain, that the moſt neceſſary Pomp of the Court conſiſts in the Ornament and Gracefulneſs of the Ladies, which do compoſe and make up the moſt Eſſential Beauty and Gallantry thereof.

Nevertheleſs it is ſo come to paſs (may it pleaſe your Lordſhips) to the general prejudice of the whole Kingdom, and of the ſaid Ladies, that ſuch things wherewith they ought to adorn themſelves, and which alone, and they only, and of Right ought to wear, are ſo Enhanſed by the bold Uſurpations and inſolent practices of the City Dames, that 'tis become Impoſſible for the aforeſaid Ladies (conſidering the vaſt Expences that their Husbands, Themſelves, Children and Servants are oblig'd unto in the Services of their Majeſties, and for the Renown of the Kingdom) to appear (with that Magnificence as they ought) on the more Solemn and Feſtival Dayes (when the Honour and Grandeur of their Majeſties ſhould be moſt apparent) in Habits equal to the City Dames, when they are, or account themſelves but meanly clad.

And by theſe prejudicial and confident Deſigns, the City Dames, by a kind of Reputation they get (by making uſe of the Reputation of the Courtiers) are introduced and admitted at Balls and Playes, ſo ſhiningly and magnificently Habited, and with ſuch ſtudied and affected Dreſſes (the better to counterfeit Ladies of Honour and Quality) that they ſeem to bid defiance to all the Court, and almoſt to compare even with the Queen her ſelf.

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And ſince the Divertiſements at Balls and Playes, permit not a particular Examination of the Conditions of All Perſons who at ſuch Times and Places do appear, yet the next day we are told, That ſuch a one who attracted the eyes of the whole Court (by a gallant and well compoſed Dreſs, and perhaps ſtrove for the place too, which only glanced or little obſerved then the Dutcheſſes and other truly Honourable Ladies) was a Merchants, or perhaps a Broakers Wife, or Daughter: By which means much occaſion of Laughter is given at Court, and a juſt Envy to the ſaid Court Ladies, to find themſelves ſo much excell'd by theſe affected Puppets, in ſuch curious and Exceeding Rich Attires; in whoſe eſteem Gold and Silver are ſo low, that they, forſooth, vainly adorn their Nurſes or their Servants with them, and impudently prattle, if the Silks or Stuffs they wear, are not of a very rare Luſtre, or exceeding Dear, that ſuch are fit, or will ſerve well enough for the Court Ladies, and not good enough for themſelves: But if any Manufactures extraordinary Glorious happen to be brought into the Realm, they muſt and will firſt have them (coſt what they will) and do raiſe the prizes of ſuch Manufactures ſo exceſſively, that the ſaid Court Ladies are not (but with ſome prejudice) able to attain.

The aforeſaid Citts do the ſame in all the Ornaments of the Sex, and are arriv'd to ſuch an Exceſs of Ambition, (the more to ſeem like Ladies of Quality) that of late they confidently keep their Footmen in colour'd Liveries: Whereas their Predeceſſors were honeſtly contented to keep a ſhort-hair'd Apprentice or two, to wipe their Shooes and make 'em ſhine (which was the chief part of their former Gallantry) and to ſtalk before their Miſtreſſes, with their Books under Arm, in a tame Look and modeſt Suit to Church: But now, forſooth, you ſhall have them ſay on all, and on the leaſt occaſions, *Where's my Foot-man?* or, *I'le ſend my Foot-man with the Things*; and *Madam ſuch a one's Foot-man*; and talk loudly in theſe Faſhions, that they may be the more Regarded: 'Tis ſaid, that between *Aldgate* and *Temple-barre*, there are near two thouſand of ſuch Livery'd Foot-men, which does much derogate from the Honour of the Court, and from that care which your Lordſhips ought to have of the Ladyes thereof.

So that, may it pleaſe your Lordſhips to conſider the Premiſes, and ſince ſome of you have, or may have the knowledge of the Expences wherein the Honour and Condition of the Court Ladies are neceſſarily engaged, together with the Ill conſequences of the Irregular Ambition of the ſaid Citts, to the great Damage of the King and Kingdom, in the abatements of the Splendor of the Court:

And further to conſider, how many Banckrupts (not to ſay Cuckolds) are hereby made, and by the exceſſive Gallantry of their Wives, who keep the Purſe, as alſo the vaſt Profuſion of Money in paying ſo Dearly for our Ornaments, and the Inſupportable confuſion of Conditions, which in this Irregularity cannot be diſcerned.

May it therefore pleaſe your Lordſhips to Order and Enact ſuch Laws, as may timely and needfully ſuppreſs all ſuch their Intollerable and Inſolent Practices for the time to come; and by ſo Doing,

You ſhall Particularly, Nobly, and Generouſly Oblige,

Moſt Honourable Lords,

Your Humble Servants,

The Ladyes at Court, &c.

Sold by *R. J.* 1681.